

Security in Northeast Asia: From Deterrence and Defense Perspectives

Shin'ichi OGAWA
The National Institute for Defense Studies

Prevalence of Political and Security Dialogues

In East Asia, political and security dialogues have been actively pursued since the mid-1990s. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), established in 1994, led this trend. A frequent series of bilateral summit meetings among Japan, the United States, China and Russia, over the last couple of years, also show the upsurge of such political and security dialogues, and consultations.¹

One reason for the increase in political and security talks in East Asia is the regionalization of security affairs brought about by the end of worldwide U.S.-Soviet confrontation. In addition, a shifting power balance in East Asia, caused largely by the emergence of China as a potential challenger to the status quo, and continuing disarray in Russia, have produced uncertainty concerning the future regional security environment. In particular, the rise of China is interpreted as a destabilizing phenomenon from realist and liberalist points of view. Realists hold that a rapidly growing China, in view of its enormous population and territory, will inevitably challenge the U.S., the dominant power in East Asia, and give rise to some tension in its relations with the United States. Furthermore, by observing the experiences brought about by Germany, the U.S., Japan and the Soviet Union in the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries, realists are apprehensive that a rapidly growing major power like

¹ These four major powers, based on a series of bilateral summit meetings, have been searching for understanding concerning respective bilateral relations, and have been exploring new four-power relations in Northeast Asia. For instance, starting with the January 1994 U.S.-Russian joint statement on "Matured Strategic Partnership," bilateral joint statements between the U.S., China, Russia and Japan followed one after another: the Sino-Russian "Constructive Partnership" statement in September 1994, the April 1996 U.S.-Japan Joint Declaration on Security—Alliance for the 21st Century, the April 1996 Sino-Russian joint statement on "Partnership for Strategic Cooperation for the 21st century," the October 1997 Sino-American joint statement on "Constructive and Strategic Partnership," the November 1998 Russo-Japanese "Creative Partnership" declaration and the November 1998 Sino-Japanese joint statement on "Partnership for Friendship and Cooperation."

China tends to launch expansionist policies.² On the other hand, liberalists who clamor for "democratic peace" and/or "democratic pacifism" theory raise concerns derived from the authoritarian nature of the Chinese political system.³ Moreover, the democratization process itself contains explosive dangers. One recent study shows there is a distinct correlation between states in transition to democratic polity and war.⁴ In short, China's economic growth and its deepening economic interdependence with the outside world alone are not sufficient to make China benign and cooperative.

The other reason for frequent security talks in East Asia can be found in the change of the U.S. attitude toward multilateral security cooperation, from a negative to a positive stance. Both the Reagan and Bush administrations showed negative attitudes toward multilateral security cooperation in East Asia. For one thing, the Soviet Union was the first to advocate such security cooperation in East Asia. For the other, the Reagan and Bush administrations entertained concerns that multilateral security cooperation would damage the U.S.-led bilateral alliances in East Asia and thus weaken U.S. influence over East Asian countries. The Clinton administration, however, has come to believe that America's burden of maintaining peace and stability in East Asia should be alleviated by promoting regional security cooperation, and that multilateral security cooperation could supplement U.S.-led bilateral alliances in East Asia.⁵

One probable reason why the United States, even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, explores measures that reduce the U.S. burden of maintaining order in East Asia is to make "Pax Americana" last as long as possible. Any unipolarity, symbolized by the current U.S. preponderance, will not last forever, be it by an oppressive hegemony or by a benign hegemony like the U.S., whose preeminence has been welcomed or at least acquiesced to by regional powers. It is a matter of time until a coercive hegemonic power invites power balancing actions against the hegemon by the second, third and fourth powers to neutralize the hegemon's harmful influence. Even in

² Samuel P. Huntington, "America's Changing Strategic Interests," *Survival*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (January/February 1991), p. 12.

³ "Democratic peace" means peaceful policy behavior of democratic countries toward other democracies, whereas "democratic pacifism" refers to peaceful policy behavior toward all other nations. For democratic peace theory, see Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); and for democratic pacifism, see Kenneth Benoit, "Democracies Really Are More Pacific (in General): Reexamining Regime Type and War Involvement," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (December 1996), pp. 636-657.

⁴ Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, "Democratization and the Danger of War," *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Summer 1995), pp. 5-38.

⁵ *The Far Eastern Economic Review*, April 15, 1993, pp. 10-11. Also see President Clinton's speech on the "New Pacific Community" delivered at the Parliament of the Republic of Korea in July 1993.

the case of a benign hegemony, its power position in relative terms vis-a-vis that of the second- or third-ranking state will deteriorate as time passes by for two main reasons: 1) The hegemon tends to bear higher costs and allow the diffusion of wealth and technology to potential rivals in maintaining security and economic order. 2) Those potential competitors tend to duplicate the hegemon's successful policies and institutions to strengthen their power bases, the so-called "sameness effect."⁶

Significance of Security Dialogue and Cooperative Security

An international political and security dialogue forum is helpful in maintaining peace and stability. Promoting political and security dialogue would alleviate mutual distrust and help resolve long-pending, historical problems between the participating countries. This would be especially so in Northeast Asia, where historical suspicions and rivalries are prevalent among China, Russia and Japan.

Furthermore, the significance of political and security dialogues is in fostering mutual understanding of threat perceptions held by each participating country. By increasing communications among participating countries, worst case analysis can be limited and security dilemmas can be alleviated. Considering the theorem that one's own security cannot be ensured without taking into account the security of other states, the significance of multilateral security dialogue cannot be neglected. Moreover, sustained security dialogues are expected to help develop confidence-building and conflict-preventing measures that are indispensable pillars for a multilateral, cooperative security regime.⁷

A cooperative security regime in East Asia, built on the basis of political and security dialogues among regional states and resultant confidence-building measures (CBMs), can mitigate an inherent defect observed in an alliance system such as the U.S.-

⁶ Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise," *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Spring 1993), pp. 7, 15.

⁷ A region-wide multilateral cooperative security regime aims to contain regional flash points and prevent them from escalating into military conflicts by focusing on non-military solutions. The measures employed in the cooperative security regime are confidence building and conflict preventing measures steps to enhance transparency and non-proliferation policies. Cooperative security is inclusive by its nature, a security-with, rather than security-against, concept. For a concise explanation of the concept of cooperative security, see Yoshinobu Yamamoto, "Kyouchouteki Anzenhoshou no Kanousei — Kisotekina Kousatsu [Feasibility of Cooperative Security — A Basic Study (author's translation)]," *Kokusaimondai*, August 1995, pp. 7-8; and Gareth Evans, *Cooperating for Peace: The Global Agenda for the 1990s and Beyond* (St. Leonards, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1993), p. 16.

Japan security arrangements. Depending on its management, the alliance, whose fundamental function is deterrence and defense, tends to give rise to unnecessary misunderstandings and anxieties among third parties and has the potential to provoke an arms race. This is because a country that comes to believe it has been targeted by the alliance often stands up to the alliance. The typical example of this is China's harsh reaction to the April 1996 U.S.-Japan Joint Declaration on Security and subsequent works on the review of the Guideline for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation. Conducting political and security dialogues is one promising measure to dispel such misunderstanding. Besides, if region-wide confidence-building and conflict-preventing measures built by sustained security dialogues among regional states grow to function as stabilizing institutions, relations among regional states are likely to be more amicable. The foundation for regional stability would be stronger compared to a regional stability maintained by U.S.-led bilateral alliances alone, such as the U.S.-Japan security arrangements. On top of this, obtaining a stronger foundation for a stable East Asian security environment can lower the political and financial costs of maintaining the U.S.-Japan alliance.

Problems and Limits of Security Dialogues and Cooperative Security

However, it is not easy to make political and security dialogues effective and workable. Although bilateral summit meetings between the United States, China, Russia and Japan have been staged in the last couple of years, a four-power dialogue forum has not yet been established. It is true that bilateral political and security dialogues could alleviate mutual distrust and help resolve various problems rooted in confrontational history, but bilateral dialogues are liable to fall into traditional diplomacy that purports to reach mutual understanding of interests and tend to give rise to suspicion on other states. In order to achieve the objectives of security dialogues, one of which is to enhance transparency of political intentions and defense policy, a security dialogue forum that involves all regional major powers should be created.

Similarly, it is not easy to build necessary norms of conduct between regional states that can develop into confidence-building and conflict-preventing measures. All the major powers involved in East Asian affairs do not always give their all-out support to building these processes. The United States, for instance, is not positive about going as far as establishing CBMs in the military field despite that the U.S. has evolved into a supporter of multilateral security cooperation. This is because, in sharp contrast to Europe, East Asia's strategic environment is essentially maritime in nature, so that any military-related CBMs in this region could in all likelihood lead to rules and regulations on U.S. naval operations.

Also, China is not enthusiastic in institutionalizing the agreed-upon agenda in political and security forums. China carries considerable historical experiences to its contemporary international involvement. Because of their experience of suffering from semi-colonization in the latter half of the 19th century, China's leaders stick fast to sovereignty and independence and emphasize national power. A country like China that regards sovereignty as sacred, and power as essential, tends to avoid international norms and regulations for fear that they might infringe on China's sovereignty and freedom of maneuver externally.⁸ In addition, China's clear preference for bilateral rather than multilateral approaches to resolving its international conflicts, which has been shaped by China's increasing confidence in its power, diminishes the prospects for an effective multilateral cooperative security regime. True, China stresses the importance of promoting regional stability and cooperative security. But Chinese officials argue for establishing a cooperative security regime based on the long-standing Chinese formula called the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" and voluntary arms control.⁹ Here again a tendency can be observed that China likes to assert its own rules and norms, rather than to be constructive at the rule-making tables of regional security forums.

Moreover, military-related CBMs that are indispensable for a multilateral cooperative security regime are hard to establish in East Asia where the U.S. alone enjoys powerful power projection capabilities. The necessity for CBMs arises in an international security environment where each of power projection-capable states holds its own sphere of influence.

More important, any type of multilateral cooperative security should not be regarded as an attempt to supplant deterrence and defense mechanisms. This is because a multilateral security institution as the ultimate security guarantor, as opposed to a cooperative security regime whose mission at best is to maintain and/or improve the security environment, is not likely to materialize. Among various cooperative security frameworks, collective security is the only concept that directly tries to deal with actual military conflict. However, the logic of collective security is fatally flawed and the working assumptions are so demanding and idealistic that the plausibility for its success is simply negated. First, a collective security concept does not fully

⁸ In the 2nd ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) held in August 1995, it was agreed that the function of the ARF should be strengthened step by step from confidence-building, through preventive diplomacy, to approaches to conflict. China, however, has not been positive to such an evolution. For instance, at the 4th ARF meeting in July 1997, despite that all other participating countries agreed to have ARF function in preventive diplomacy, China alone showed a negative attitude toward such a development. *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, July 28, 1997.

⁹ Robert G. Sutter, "Asian-Pacific Security Arrangements: The U.S.-Japanese Alliance and China's Strategic View," CRS Report for Congress, March 21, 1997, p. 8.

consider the fact that nation-states cannot help being self-centered in the real world without any supra-national authority to control sovereign states. Collective security demands a spirit of self-sacrifice and surrender of national egoism, both of which cannot be expected on every occasion. Second, as an operational defect, there can be a military conflict, such as one over disputed territory, that is difficult to judge if invasion is really occurred and thus collective military sanction cannot be easily employed. In addition, if a trouble maker is a militarily powerful state, other member states would find it difficult to cope with it, even collectively.¹⁰

Another weak point of a multilateral cooperative regime is found in its inherent fragility. Although any cooperative regime purports to facilitate cooperation among member states, it is at the same time a scheme in which interests of respective member states collide with each other. Owing to this, a multilateral cooperative institution tends to be neutralized by the difference in relative gains or unilateral actions by an influential member state. This risk applies expressly to a cooperative regime on security, compared to a cooperative regime on trade and economy where conflicts of interests among member states do not have direct impact on security. In fact, looking back in history since the 19th century, a regime of multilateral political and security cooperation was created whenever major wars were terminated. However, regardless of its nature and formula, based on either a concert of powers or a more idealistic concept, such a regime malfunctioned as time passed because of emerging clashes of interests among major powers.

Northeast Asian Strategic Environment in the Beginning of the 21st Century

As discussed earlier, it is not easy to build a multilateral cooperative security regime and, even if created, it is likely to be powerless in dealing with actual military conflicts. Furthermore, as history shows, the function as well as the fate of a multilateral cooperative security regime will be at the mercy of major powers. In terms of its role in maintaining regional peace and stability, a cooperative security regime can at best play a role of easing confrontational relations and alleviating the exclusiveness of alliance systems.

Taking into consideration these defects of a cooperative security system, how should we deal with the shifting power balance caused by the rise of China and the

¹⁰ For a more sweeping criticism against collective security, see, for instance, Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 5th ed., (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), pp. 407-410; John J. Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions," *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Winter 1994/95), pp. 30-34.

continuing disarray in Russia? East Asian states are required to visualize measures to make the shift of power balance a peaceful one. In order to achieve this, East Asian countries must facilitate the process by which China integrates itself into the regional affairs. Besides, since a rising major power seeks to change status quo and to establish new political arrangements that more accurately reflect its expanded power and influence, East Asian countries are advised to prepare an appropriate place for China at the regional table through negotiations and mutual compromise.

At the same time, however, whether through its own resources or with the help of other countries, each East Asian country should maintain a viable but non-provocative deterrence and defense mechanism that assures regional peace and tranquility. Nothing but viable and non-provocative deterrence and defense mechanism can assure peaceful and incremental change of power balance. Among the deterrence and defense mechanisms in East Asia, the U.S.-Japan alliance is the most powerful and enduring one that enables stationing of U.S. force in the region. And the U.S. force is the only force whose presence is welcomed or at least acquiesced to as an indispensable stabilizer by most East Asian countries. In this sense, the security benefits derived from the maintenance of the U.S.-Japan alliance are not confined merely to bilateral relations, but extended to East Asia as a whole. The U.S. and Japan must manage the alliance to be a non-threatening pillar of regional peace and stability in East Asia. China should be persuaded that the U.S.-Japan alliance is not anti-specific country but pro-peace; it does not focus against China or any other specific country, unless China or any other regional state presents a clear and present threat to regional stability.

Finally, we do have to recall that the U.S., China and Russia, three of the four major powers in East Asia that have decisive roles in maintaining regional peace and stability, are nuclear-weapon states. Nuclear weapons have revolutionized international politics by fundamentally altering the costs of conflict among great powers. As illustrated by the U.S.-Soviet Cold War, nuclear weapons, if backed up by a reliable command and control system and a stable mutual deterrence relationship, have an undeniable power to put the possessor under strong self-restraint in limited war and crisis behavior. There is no reason that this dumping effect of nuclear weapons (or "nuclear peace") cannot be applied to Chinese decision-makers. In sharp contrast to great powers in the pre-nuclear age, China, the U.S. and Russia, no matter how confrontational their relations might evolve, have an unshakable common interest in avoiding military battles that have a real potential to escalate into a nuclear exchange.¹¹ With this common interest

¹¹ Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); Avery Goldstein, "Great Expectations: Interpreting China's Arrival," *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Winter

Shin'ichi Ogawa

as the starting point, the U.S. and China must tackle the Taiwan and Korean Peninsula issues, as well as their bilateral relations.

1997/98), pp. 70-71, 73.